UNSOLVED BOMBINGS

Both photos: Camera Press

Bettino Craxi (left): determined to stay at the helm. Rino Formica (right): convinced that the CIA is running the show

The Italian secret services have for years been controlled by anti-democratic forces. Their direct links with the CIA and the Mafia have become increasingly clear. But are they deliberately trying to destabilise Italy's democratic institutions, asks Donald Sassoon

> They have warned us. With this massacre they have told us that Italy must keep its place in the international scene. Ours must be nothing more than a walk-on role. With that blood they are telling us that our country cannot develop its own policies in the Mediterranean. They have reminded us that we are and must remain subordinate.. Our national security systems are not able to oppose them and by international agreement they are expected to be inefficient.

THE 'MASSACRE' referred to the explosion on the Naples-Milan train which occurred in the middle of the tunnel between Florence and Bologna on 23 December, killing 17 people and wounding hundreds. The speaker was Rino Formica, leader of the Socialist Party group in the Chamber of Deputies and member of the parliamentary committee on the secret services, in an interview to the Rome daily *La Repubblica*. 'They' are just 'they', throughout the interview. 'They' remain unmentioned not just for diplomatic reasons but also because everyone in Italy understands only too well that 'they' means the CIA.

Rino Formica is not just anybody. He is the potential leader of the Socialist Party should the incumbent, Bettino Craxi, who is also the Prime Minister, be ousted or promoted to higher things such as the Presidency of the Republic. It is also curious that a high-ranking member of a party which has loyally accepted the installation of cruise missiles in Sicily and attempted to outdo the leading Christian Democratic Party in 'Atlanticism' should suggest that the secret services of the country's main allies are in the business of blowing up innocent citizens.

The interview was tucked away in the inside pages. For a week there was a remarkable lack of reaction. It seemed as if Craxi was determined to ignore the episode, as if it were quite usual for a senior politician to accuse the CIA of interfering in the affairs of a NATO country, with the country's own secret services looking the other way because of some political decision or international agreement.

A few days later Leopoldo Elia, who is the head of the Supreme Court, declared in an interview that there are mysterious forces at work to destabilise the country and ensure that it will remain subordinate to foreign countries. He then added that, while the government had assured the public that Italy's secret services had been purged of freemasons, mafiosi and fascists and were now reliable, the massacre of 23 December had proved otherwise.

If Formica could be ignored, the Head of the Constitutional Court could not. Giovanni Spadolini, the pro-American leader of the Republican Party, who is also the Defence Minister, intervened to refute Formica and to demand that Craxi speak up. A debate which in normal circumstances should have occurred within the Cabinet was all over the newspapers. Members of the five parties which form the present coalition engaged in an open debate on whether or not there was a secret pact between Italy and the US whereby Italy had undertaken to defer to the US on matters concerning national security.

It took two weeks for Craxi to come down on the side of Spadolini and declare that what Formica had said was not true: there was no agreement which enshrined Italy's subordination to the US; the relation between the two countries on these matters was a question of give and take. Italy's secret services were now clean, he said. There was nothing to worry about. But Formica was not sacked.

FORMICA's analysis may not be true, but it is plausible. In the first place there is the question of the different ways in which the Italian State has reacted to terrorism. Left-wing or 'red' terrorism has been brought under control. Hundreds of left-wing terrorists (and perhaps a few who are innocent) are now in jail. Many have confessed and denounced others and have been given a reduced prison sentence. It is generally agreed that left-wing terrorism has been defeated, though there might be a few groups who are operational.

Right-wing terrorism has followed a different course: instead of specific targets (politicians, journalists, trade unionists and managers), it has engaged in indiscriminate bombings. It was responsible for the first terrorist incident: the bomb in the Bank of Agriculture in Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969 which killed 16 people and wounded 88. At first the police accused anarchists, including one who (as the Italians put it) 'was suicided' by falling/jumping/being pushed out of the window of Milan's police station. Then it became clear that the bombers came from right-wing circles. Neo-fascists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, as well as secret service agent Guido Giannettini, were condemned in 1979 to life imprisonment. An appeal court overturned the verdict two years later. To date it has not been proved who was responsible.

In the northern town of Brescia, on 28 May 1974, a bomb exploded during an anti-fascist demonstration killing eight people and wounding 94. Those responsible were never found. On 4 August 1974 a bomb on a train exploded near Bologna killing 12 and injuring 105. The latest incident was a carbon copy of this.

The most serious terrorist attack in Italian history occurred at the Bologna train station on 2 August 1980: 85 dead, more than 200

wounded. The head of the military secret services (the SISMI), General Pietro Musumeci, arrived in Bologna, announced triumphantly that his men had discovered the truth and gave the investigating magistrates a report with the names of the terrorists. The report was false but nevertheless successfully sidetracked the investigators. Musumeci is now under arrest.

Virtually all heads of Italy's secret services since 1964 have been involved in some form of illegal activities. They have either had to resign, have been under suspicion of involvement with terrorism, have been arrested, or were members of the secret masonic lodge P2. One became a neo-fascist member of Parliament and has successfully claimed parliamentary immunity.

Thus there is no doubt that at least one of Formica's accusations is more than valid: Italy's secret services have been not simply unreliable but under the direct control of anti-democratic forces. In spite of Defence Minister Spadolini's assurances it is unlikely that the clean-up has been very thorough. The services are probably filled with people hired by those who have been dismissed. The parliamentary commission which is supposed to control the services has no teeth, but then no country has been able to devise a system for controlling spies and counter-spies.

WHAT OF THE international connection? Of course, there is no 'hard' evidence to support the view that the Italian services are working on behalf of a foreign power. What is certain is that being situated in the Mediterranean — a crucible of international tension — makes Italy the focus of the undesired attentions of many warring factions and of the secret services of the superpowers and their protégés, including Bulgaria and Israel.

Italy is at the centre of a thriving arms and drugs traffic. The connections between this, the mafia, the freemasons and the various secret services are shadowy and as yet undisclosed, but appear to be linked with international events such as the alleged Bulgarian attempt to assassinate the Pope. It is curious that after 15 years the police have never been able to come to grips with right-wing terrorism as they have done with the left-wing variety.

Another coincidence of events is interesting. Up until the early '70s, Giulio Andreotti — five times Prime Minister, former Minister of Defence and now Foreign Minister — was considered the Italian politician closest to the US and the strongest representative of the Vatican in the Italian government. He has since changed his line, supporting co-operation with the Communists and an independent foreign policy. Suddenly a list containing the names of the members of the P2 secret freemasons lodge has been found. The US has allowed Buscetta, a leading mafiosi, to return to Italy in order to spill the beans about Mafia personalities. And somehow the P2 masonic lodge trail and the mafia trail have led in the direction of Andreotti.

In 1976 Andreotti became Prime Minister of the first government since 1947 which was openly supported by the Communists. The architect of this initiative was Aldo Moro, President of the Christian Democrats, killed by the Red Brigades in 1978. Moro's widow is convinced that the long hand of the US is behind the Red Brigades. At the trial of her husband's murderers she claimed that Henry Kissinger had once told Moro: 'You must stop trying to co-operate with the communists. Either you do this or you will pay for it'.

Moro, the powerful figure in the alliance with the Communists, died, but Andreotti continued to be on good terms with the Communists even after the end of the entente between Christian Democrats and the PCI. As foreign minister he has travelled widely, pursuing a dialogue with Syria and Libya, has gone to Moscow and to Poland where he tried to mediate between the Church, Solidarity and the government and has consistently taken a pro-détente line.

He had a strong chance of succeeding Pertini as President of the Republic in June this year. But the suspicions over his Mafia and P2 connections are such that the Communists can no longer support him, not even covertly. Meanwhile the Socialists are trapped in a government enclosed in the confines of a strategy aimed at ensuring the continuing presence of Craxi at its helm. The price to be paid is subservience to the US. No one in Italy poses the question of whether the country should continue to be a member of NATO any more. What is really at stake is the degree of national independence Italy is allowed to have. Craxi is prepared to side with the Atlantic lobby against Formica. It remains to be seen whether the rest of his party will follow him. □

SUDAN

ISLAMIC REGIME IN TROUBLE

Deborah Pugh reports on a dictatorship losing its grip

Khartoum

MAHMOUD MOHAMED TAHA, the 76 year old leader of an obscure Muslim political organisation, the Republican Brothers, was the cause of minor political nuisance to all governments in the Sudan since the 1940s, when he became active against the British. The decision by President Ja'far Numeiri to go ahead with his public execution last Friday is evidence of the extent to which he is now rattled by the growing political opposition to his regime. Such public executions have been rare in modern Sudanese history.

Publicly, Numeiri was just upholding the verdict of Sudan's new Islamic courts, in order to 'protect the nation from the danger of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha and his slander of God'. But the political purpose of the execution was to give a warning to the critics of his military dictatorship. To oppose Numeiri — the 'leader-president' and Imam — has now been made tantamount to criticising God, which is heresy and punishable by death. Numeiri's new Islamic 'Courts of Prompt Justice' bear far more resemblance to martial law than to religious courts. In this case the judge was in his early twenties and blatantly ignorant of the detail of Islamic law.

The elderly Taha was chosen to make an example because his party lacks any mass base. The Republican Brothers are mainly students and intellectuals. Unlike their larger and far more militantly conservative rivals, the Muslim Brotherhood — ironically the one of many banned Sudanese parties which support Numeiri's 'Islamic' policy — the Republican Brothers believe in passive resistance, not armed struggle. Moreover, Taha's unorthodox reinterpretation of the Islamic legal code has not exactly become 'popular politics'.

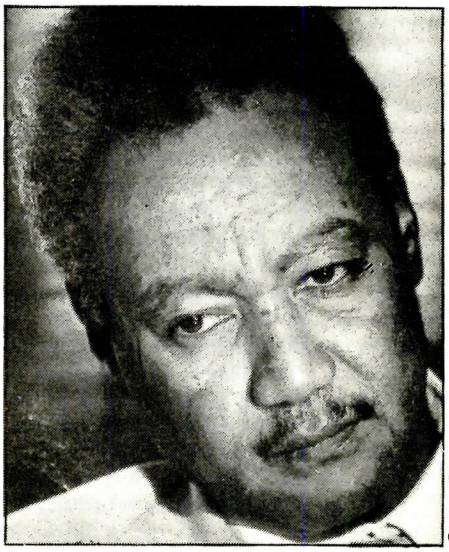
His denunciation, though, of the harsh way in which Islamic law is now enforced in the Sudan is echoed by many ordinary Sudanese Muslims and by every political party, except the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sudanese Socialist Union (the country's only legal party). While most northern Sudanese are devout Muslims, few have been able to stomach public amputations for theft or lashings for drinking alcohol.

The Sudanese have a live-and-let-live attitude to life and religion. Today the visitor to Khartoum is repeatedly told: 'This is not Islam. Islam is merciful to those who are starving and steal for food'.

The effect of Taha's execution on the Sudan has been electric. In the week before his hanging, there was unprecedented political unity in meetings at Khartoum University demanding his release. The Communist Party, the liberal Unionist Democratic Party, the Islamic Umma Party, trade unions and student organisations have all united in condemnation of it. Rival demonstrations followed the execution, with government supporters from the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrating with police protection and the opposition risking imprisonment.

This sudden unity of the opposition has clearly worried the Americans and Egyptians, the current sponsors of Numeiri's erratic 16-year dictatorship. They are baffled by his sudden switch from playboy to puritan. It is believed that it was pressure from Numeiri's horrified allies (President Mubarak is no fan of Islamic fundamentalism) that saved the four young men also sentenced to death along with Taha.

WESTERN CONCERN about Numeiri's



Camera Press

General Numeiri: playboy turned desperate puritan